Television Effecting Student’s Attention Spans in the Classroom

***Introduction/Background***

Television has been around for years now controlling and captivating individual’s attention. Effects may now be seen in the classroom with student’s attention spans lessening. Carl Erik Landhuis from Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Research Unit, agrees, “Excessive televisionviewing has been cited as a possible cause of this problem” (2007). Television may be a primary reason for student’s lack of attention within the classroom. If it is that television may cause these effects what might be done to help the situation for students, parents, and teachers. There is always the case of television not being the cause of students losing interest in the classroom quickly, but if so, then what other factors may be taken into account to provide such reasoning. Author Demitris Christakis writes, “The latest, and perhaps most controversial, way that TV hasbeen likened to lead is its association with decreased attentionalcapacity. Claims that it shortens attention spans were initiallybased on anecdotal reports from teachers in the early 1970swho believed that the rise of TV viewing among preschool childrenled to 5-minute attention spans at school entry. (2007). Almost forty years later and the problems continue. It has not been proven whether television bad, but many researchers believe the viewing of television does effect attention spans of students.

***Purpose***

Television affects the lives of many students in and out America. Researches feel that television has affected student’s attention spans within the classroom. According to author Elias, M. (2004), “The more television infants and toddlers watch, the more likely they are to have trouble paying attention and concentrating during their early school years, a study reports today.” Teachers have been told to teach in seven to ten minute increments so that the students will maintain engagement. It has been stated that commercials occur every seven to ten minutes leading the student’s attention to be held for that amount of time before lost. According to writers Karen Wilson and James Korn (2007), “Now a study from Arkansas State University-Jonesboro finds that students spend 13 hours a week studying, but nearly that much—12 hours a week—watching TV. It’s tempting to assume from this data that television is taking up what should be study time.” It seems that television is affecting student’s study time and classroom time leaving less room for education. Wilson and Korn found after researching studies, “Perhaps the only valid use of this parameter is a rhetorical device to encourage teachers to develop ways to maintain student interest in the classroom” (2007). With television affecting student’s attention spans teachers must come up with ways of engagement for the students.

***Literature Review and Limitations***

Author Landhuis writes of short attention problems linked to television. Landhuis uses a well arranged format for his research design. He breaks down the sections into parts. For example, Landhuis discuss the methods of his research depicting the amount of children used, ages, how parents observed, percentages, types of attention problems, and statistical analysis (2007). His organization allows for an easily understandable writing. Landhuis uses observations in his research. He also discusses breakdowns of how the data was collected including the people and children used. He gives statistical data that is relevant to children’s attention span that is affected by the viewing of television (2007). The study consists of much strength. Strengths of his writing is the organization of the written research. He uses detail as to how the data was obtained including whom and what was used to gather the data. He uses other resources to support his ideas, and gives an abstract and key words that help with deciding the need of the article. This article may have a weakness of providing too much detail not allowing for just basic reading of the topic being discussed. Discussing more of the observations made such as examples may give the reader a better understanding of how all the given detail goes into effect for the article. This article is relevant to my study due to it giving a breakdown of detail in observations and statistical data allowing for detailed citations for the research topic being written. The article is well organized allowing me to gather information from a specific area quickly. The article specifically discusses my topic dealing with the lacking of children’s attention spans due to viewing of television.

Christakis’ research design began with a background of television giving examples of different insights people may have of television. Christakis then continues with the reasoning of why television is the cause of shorter attention spans. She then uses other references’ observations to support her thoughts and ideas of the effects of television on a child. Finally, Christakis closes with how television plays a large role and it’s important to make it relevant television viewings (2007). Christakis uses the reference of writing by Landhuis. Landhuis used observational data as a means of findings. Christakis mentions that just how experiments are not done on humans to link smoking and lung cancer, so is connecting the observations of television and attention spans (2007). The study has the strength of providing a reference that coincides with the topic. The study is also organized in an understandable way. Another strength that the research begins with an opening of questions to help the reader open her mind to different view and observations of the topic. This article is relevant to my study considering it states findings and observations that I might use as support to my ideas. It also discuss the effect television has on children and children is of importance in my research. Overall, this article provides information that is specific to my topic allowing for great support for my research.

Elias writes of short attention spans being linked to television. Elias briefly gives facts from other researches and describes how television may be affecting student’s attention spans. Considering this is a journal article from USA Today it is brief and short allowing readers to get a just of what is being studied and quick summaries of what researchers are studying to find results. Author Marylyn Elias writes of how attentions span is linked to television. Elias (2009) begins her article stating, “The more television infants and toddlers watch, the more likely they are to have trouble paying attention and concentrating during their early school years, a study reports today.” The author continues her article with support of the idea and ways to prevent the problem. Elias (2007) states that children under the age of two should not watch more than two hours of television a day. Elias continues the article with minor statistics. The author states that frequent television viewers score in the highest 10% for concentration problems, and many may have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (2007). Elias continues her article with more statistics and concludes with how experts should take a closer look at these affects.

Karen Wilson and James Korn write of attention during a lecture extending beyond 10 minutes causing lack of attention. Authors, Karen Wilson and James Korn (2007) of Saint Louis University begin their article with, “Many authors claim that students’ attention declines approximately 10 to 15 min into lectures.” The authors use various studies to find whether this is true. The authors feel that the studies found lack to account for individual differences (2007). One study included students note taking in class period intervals. Different time periods were used. The study also included student retention and self-report. The authors then made observations from other authors’ studies and data collection and included physiological measures. In conclusion, Wilson and Korn (2007) found, “It is clear that students’ attention does vary during lectures, but the literature does not support the perpetuation of the 10 to 15 min attention estimate. Perhaps the only valid use of this parameter is a rhetorical device to encourage teacher to develop ways to maintain student interest in the classroom.” The authors hypothesis matched their conclusion.

***Research Questions***

Does television affect a student’s attention span as many have stated? If television is not proven as the cause for lack of full attention what other factors can be taken into account? What may be a reason for television being blamed as the source of student’s attention spans lessening? How might teachers alleviate the lessening of student’s attention spans with course material engagement?

***Sample***

Christakis’ article provides characteristics to the topic. The article discusses the effects of television on the attention span of a child. It gives ideas and observations of ways in which television has made an effect. Both the research topic and the article contain characteristics that perfectly coincide with my topic of research. Landhuis’ article provides characteristics to the topic. The article discusses the effects of television on the attention span of a child. It gives ideas and observations of ways in which television has made an effect. Both the research topic and the article contain characteristics that perfectly coincide with the topic of research. Wilson and Korn write of a research that the ending results show that there is not a definitive connection to seven to ten minute teaching to student’s lack of attention. The authors’ state what other factors may take account for the reasoning given. This relates to the topic of research in that it provides answers as to what other factors may be taken into account for lack of full attention. Elias gives brief research and notification as to what is stated about television effecting children and what is being done to find results. The article relates to the research topic in that it provides a brief explanation or summary as to what is currently occurring in for the research topic.

***Data Collection Procedures/Instruments***

Elias’ data will be collected from personal observations given by the author of the article. There are also statistics provided. This data relates to the second research question which identifies the source of individual differences as a means of having a short attention span in the classroom. Christakis’ data is collected through classroom observations from the author. This data relates to a research question by giving information on how television shortens the attention span among children. The author also identifies that other casual arguments may be made which coincides with the second research question. Wilson and Korn’s data is collected through various observations such as: during lectures, self-reports of student attention, and studies of physiological measures of attention. This relates to the second, third, and fourth research question because it gives the 10-15 minute attention span window, identifies various ways in which student’s attention span may be altered other than television, and how it may be said just to have teacher give more engaging lessons.

***Data Analysis***

Christakis’ data will be analyzed through classroom observations from the author. This data relates to the research question by giving information on how television shortens the attention span among children. The author also identifies that other casual arguments may be made which coincides with the second research question. Elias’ data will be analyzed from personal observations given by the author of the article. There are also statistics provided. This data relates to the second research question which identifies the source of individual differences as a means of having a short attention span in the classroom. Korn and Wilson’s data will be analyzed through various observations such as: during lectures, self-reports of student attention, and studies of physiological measures of attention. This relates to the research question because it give the 10-15 minute attention span window while identifying various ways in which student’s attention span may be altered other than television.

***Action Plan***

Television has been said to break the concentration of students leading to lesser attention spans. Research was done showing that television cannot be proven has a factor to the effect of lessening attention spans. Researcher’ Wilson and Korn (2007) have found:

It is clear that students’ attention does vary during lectures, but the literature does not support the perpetuation of the 10 to 15 min attention estimate. Perhaps the only valid use of this parameter is a rhetorical device to encourage teachers to develop ways to maintain student interest in the classroom. If psychologist and other educators continue to promote such a parameter as an empirically based estimate, they need to support it with more controlled research. Beyond that, teachers must do as much as possible to increase students’ motivation to “pay attention” as well as try to understand what students are really thinking about during class.

With this information, it is seen that there are definitely attention problems, but to answer the first research question of does television affect student’s attention spans. As Landhuis (2007) finds, “Our results show that this is independent of gender differences, early inattention problems, socioeconomic status, and cognitive ability.” As a result, attention spans have lessened over the years, but it is best to just have the teacher engage the students to best keep their attention in this technology based age.

***References***

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